

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 16, as amended, and new claims 17 and 18 appear in this application for the Examiner's review and consideration. The new claims and the amendments are fully supported by the specification and claims as originally filed. Therefore, there is no issue of new matter. In addition, the amendments to the independent claims add recitations that elaborate on the structure of the presently claimed invention, and, thus, do not affect the scope of the claims. The amendments only further clarify the claimed invention.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in claim 14.

Claim 3 was objected to for being of improper dependent form for the reasons set forth on page 2 of the Office Action. In response, Applicant has canceled claim 3 without prejudice. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner withdraw the objection of claim 3.

Claims 2, 4, 7, and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for the reasons set forth on pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action.

In response, Applicant submits that claims 2 and 10 have been amended to delete the term "possibly" from those claims;

Claim 4 has been amended to change "two layers" to --a first layer and a second layer--, providing the required antecedent basis for the first and second layers recited in that claim; and

Claim 7 has been amended to delete the term "top layer" from that claim.

Applicant notes that claim 10, as amended, recites "optionally subjecting the layers to a drying process." Under M.P.E.P. §2173.05(h)(III), the alternative claiming term "optionally" is acceptable where there is "no ambiguity as to which alternatives are covered by the claim." In the present case, no such ambiguity arises from the use of the term "optionally." Those skilled in the art will understand that the layers of printing material may be subjected to a drying process, but, alternatively, the drying process may be skipped. At least one of the layers will be subjected to a partial curing treatment, as recited in claim 1.

Therefore, as those skilled in the art will understand the claims, and the claims particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter Applicant regards as the invention, the claims meet the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claims 2, 4, 7, and 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Claim 13 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,110,316 to Kobayashi et al. (Kobayashi) for the reasons set forth on page 3 of the Office Action.

In response, Applicant submits that claim 13, as amended, is directed to a device for printing objects. The presently claimed device comprises two or more processing stations configured to successively provide two or more layers of printing medium on a supple carrier, and a printing device configured to bring the layers of printing material on the carrier in contact with the object to be printed, thereby transferring the layers onto the object.

Therefore, to be within the scope of the presently claimed invention, a reference must disclose a printing device having at least two processing stations and a printing device, where the processing stations are configured to provide two or more layers of printing medium successively onto a supple carrier.

In contrast to the presently claimed invention, Kobayashi discloses a device for producing a decorative laminate by adhering a transfer printing sheet to the three-dimensional irregular surface of a base. The device may have multiple processing stations, as cited in the Office Action. The disclosed device does not have two or more processing stations configured to successively provide two or more layers of printing medium on a supple carrier, as presently claimed. Instead, the disclosed device has a single processing station at which

[S]olid particles are caused to collide with the transfer printing sheet from the back surface thereof with the transfer printing sheet (S) facing the irregular surface of the base (B), and the transfer printing sheet (S) is brought into pressure contact with the irregular surface of the base (B) by utilizing the collisional pressure, thereby transferring the transfer printing sheet (S) to the base (B). Kobayashi, Abstract, Figure 1, and the text describing Figure 1 (column 3, line 27, to column 6, line 11.

The only processing station disclosed by Kobayashi in which printing medium is provided on a carrier is the apparatus within chamber 16. *See*, Figure 1. Kobayashi does not disclose the presently claimed invention.

Therefore, as Kobayashi does not disclose the presently claimed printing device, the present claims are not anticipated by that reference. Accordingly, it is respectfully

requested that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claim 13 over Kobayashi under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

Claims 1 and 7 to 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as being unpatentable over International Patent Application Publication No. WO 00/61376 to LaFaille et al. (LaFaille) in view of UK Patent Application Publication No. 2 079 219 A to Shadbolt et al. (Shadbolt) for the reasons set forth on pages 4 to 7 of the Office Action;

Claims 2 to 4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as being unpatentable over LaFaille and Shadbolt and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,391,853 to Pointon and Japanese Publication No. JP 2137993 to Tanaka et al. (Tanaka) for the reasons set forth on pages 6 and 7 of the Office Action; and

Claims 5 and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as being unpatentable over LaFaille and Shadbolt and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,254,712 to Enlow et al. (Enlow) for the reasons set forth on page 7 of the Office Action.

In response, Applicant submits that the present application is directed to a method for printing objects with a multi-layered print. The claimed method comprises providing two or more layers of printing medium, at least partially situated one above the other, on a support carrier, subjecting at least one of the layers to a partial curing treatment, simultaneously transferring the layers onto the object to be printed by bringing the layers of printing medium on the carrier and the object into mutual contact, and removing the object from the carrier after the transfer of said layers is completed.

To render the present claims obvious, the cited references must disclose or suggest subjecting at least one of the layers to a partial curing treatment.

As stated in the Office Action, LaFaille does not teach providing multiple layers on a carrier to transfer onto an object, where one of the layers has been subjected to at least a partial curing treatment. Thus, LaFaille does not disclose or suggest, providing multiple layers on a carrier to transfer onto an object, where one of the layers has been subjected to at least a partial curing treatment, as presently claimed.

Shadbolt adds nothing to LaFaille. Shadbolt discloses dry transfer materials and a method of making such materials. The disclosed dry transfer materials comprise a plastics film carrier, a transferable image on the carrier, and an adhesive to adhere the image to a desired surface. Example 1, as cited by the Office Action, discloses hot air drying each of the layers applied to the carrier. Those skilled in the art, following the disclosure of Shadbolt would understand that the layers are not partially dried or cured. Instead, those skilled in the art would understand that each layer is completely dried. There is nothing in

Shadbolt that would provide any reason for one of ordinary skill in the art to only partially dry or cure each of the layers applied to the carrier. Shadbolt clearly discloses that each layer is to be air dried at a temperature of 65° or 80°C.

The Office Action states that, based on the disclosure of the present specification at page 3, lines 28 and 29, drying must be interpreted as a type of partial curing treatment. This statement is based on the paragraph at page 3, lines 28 to 34, of the present specification, which teaches:

By a partial curing, more particularly, drying, different effects can be intended. A first aim consists in that the layer of printing medium which is cured, dried, respectively, is rendered less sensitive to dust particles. Dust particles actually will adhere less, the drier the respective layer of printing medium is. Thereby, the risk is reduced that, when realizing the method, dust particles end up in the print.

Those skilled in the art, following the teaching of the present specification at page 3, lines 28 to 34, will clearly understand that the subject paragraph describes and defines partial curing and partial drying. This is confirmed by the statement “the layer of printing medium which is cured, dried, respectively.” Complete drying is not taught to be partial curing.

Therefore, as Shadbolt discloses complete drying of the layers applied to the carrier, Shadbolt does not disclose or suggest the partial curing of at least one layer of printing medium provided on a supple carrier, as presently claimed.

Even if the disclosures of LaFaille and Shadbolt were combined, the resulting combination would not provide the presently claimed invention. Instead, one of ordinary skill in the art combining the disclosures LaFaille and Shadbolt would completely dry or cure each of the layers applied to the carrier. LaFaille and Shadbolt, whether taken alone or in combination, do not disclose or suggest and provide no reason for the partial curing of at least one layer of printing medium provided on a supple carrier, as presently claimed.

Pointon and Tanaka do not add anything to the disclosures of LaFaille and Shadbolt. Those references disclose curing a layer or film with ultraviolet light. Pointon and Tanaka do not disclose or suggest partially curing the layer or film.

Even if the disclosures of Pointon and Tanaka were combined with those of LaFaille and Shadbolt, the resulting combination would not provide the presently claimed method. One of ordinary skill in the art following the disclosures of LaFaille, Shadbolt, Pointon, and Tanaka would completely dry or cure each of the layers applied to the carrier.

The cited references, whether taken alone or in combination, do not disclose or suggest and provide no reason for the partial curing of at least one layer of printing medium provided on a supple carrier, as presently claimed.

Enlow adds nothing the disclosure of the other cited references. Enlow discloses an extrusion coating process for making high transparency protective and decorative films. Enlow discloses the removal of particles or contaminants from a carrier. Enlow does not disclose or suggest partially curing the layer or film, as presently claimed.

Even if the disclosure of Enlow was combined with the disclosures of the other cited references, the resulting combination would not provide the presently claimed method. One of ordinary skill in the art following the disclosures of LaFaille, Shadbolt, Pointon, Tanaka, and Enlow would completely dry or cure each of the layers applied to the carrier. The cited references, whether taken alone or in combination, do not disclose or suggest and provide no reason for the partial curing of at least one layer of printing medium provided on a supple carrier, as presently claimed.

Therefore, as the cited references, whether taken alone or in combination, do not disclose or suggest and provide no reason to obtain the partial curing of at least one layer of printing medium provided on a supple carrier, the present claims are not obvious over those references. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner withdraw the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) of claims 1 and 7 to 12 over LaFaille and Shadbolt, of claims 2 to 4 LaFaille, Shadbolt, Pointon, and Tanaka, and of claims 5 and 6 over LaFaille, Shadbolt, and Enlow.

Claim 15 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over LaFaille for the reasons set forth on pages 7 and 8 of the Office Action. In response, Applicant submits that claim 15 has been canceled, mooted the rejection of that claim. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claim 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over LaFaille.

Claim 16 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as being unpatentable over Kobayashi in view of LaFaille, for the reasons set forth on page 8 of the Office Action.

In response, Applicant submits that claim 16 depends from claim 13, and, thus, requires at least two processing stations and a printing device, where the processing stations are configured to provide two or more layers of printing medium successively onto a supple carrier. As discussed above, Kobayashi does not disclose a printing device having more than one processing station configured to successively provide two or more layers of printing medium on a supple carrier. Instead, Kobayashi discloses a device

having only a single processing station in which printing material is placed on a carrier. Therefore, Kobayashi, provides no reason to those skilled in the art to obtain a printing device comprising two or more processing station configured to successively provide two or more layers of printing medium on a supple carrier, as presently claimed. Thus, Kobayashi does not disclose or suggest the presently claimed printing device.

LaFaille adds nothing to Kobayashi. LaFaille may disclose a chamber-shaped part, open at one side. However, LaFaille does not disclose or suggest two or more processing stations configured to successively provide two or more layers of printing medium on a supple carrier, as presently claimed. Even if the disclosures of Kobayashi and LaFaille were combined, the resulting combination would not provide a printing device, comprising two or more processing stations configured to successively provide two or more layers of printing medium on a supple carrier, as presently claimed. Kobayashi and LaFaille, whether taken alone or in combination, do not disclose or suggest the presently claimed invention.

Therefore, as Kobayashi and LaFaille, whether taken alone or in combination, do not disclose or suggest the presently claimed invention, the present claims are not obvious over those references. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claim 16 over Kobayashi and LaFaille under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Applicants thus submit that the entire application is now in condition for allowance, an early notice of which would be appreciated. Should the Examiner not agree with Applicants' position, a personal or telephonic interview is respectfully requested to discuss any remaining issues prior to the issuance of a further Office Action, and to expedite the allowance of the application.

A Petition for Extension of Time is submitted herewith. Should any other fees be due, however, please charge such fees to Deposit Account No. 11-0600.

Respectfully submitted,

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